

Advocacy through environmental change: developing a critical praxis

End of project report



Executive summary

This report is one outcome from a Newcastle University research secondment funded by the Economic and Social Research Council through its Impact Acceleration Account scheme. It aims to support an agenda, set recently by Newcastle City Council in a number of policy documents and public addresses by the leader, of seeking to move from providing services to facilitating and enabling provision by community organisations and civic actors. This agenda differs from approaches to dealing with austerity which have been advanced in other local authorities, for example North Tyneside has privatised many of its remaining services while other authorities have sought simply to reduce service provision without changing the culture of provision. Support for service delivery through communities and the third sector raises a number of difficult issues including how to increase capacity in these areas and how their relationship with the local authority should be shaped. This report addresses each of these areas by first considering how and whether capacity might be built to achieve environmental change and reduce demand for services and also what the implications are for local authority services of seeking to draw on the distinctive knowledge, desires and capacity which exists within the civic and community sector.

Part one of this report may be of interest to projects seeking local environmental change in the city and beyond. It reflects on an experiment with combining youth work and environmental change in a back lane in Newcastle's west end. The project sought to develop an approach to working which would put local people in the lead, thereby building on synergies with the local community co-operative Greening Wingrove. By changing the identity of the lane as a place suitable for young people to play the project hoped to also address problems of street litter and fly tipping, which emerged from resident consultation as the top priority for action locally and which result in substantial costs for Newcastle City Council. The use of objects, art and play activities were used to build relationships, both with young people and with older residents on the surrounding streets. Some of the dilemmas associated with community development are also outlined here.

The second part of the report may be of more interest to local politicians and stakeholders. It draws on the intensive approach to engaging with local residents outlined above, and also incorporates work carried out by Greening Wingrove, to discuss some of the wider causes of street litter as they were understood by local people. The report argues that the causes of street litter include the persistent failure of parts of the private sector to meet their environmental obligations as well as the existence of a complex, and often permissive, regulatory environment which makes it difficult for local authorities to take action. These issues tend to disproportionately affect deprived and transient neighbourhoods, while funding cuts are currently aimed at making local authorities more dependent on stimulating private sector activity at the expense of weightings in favour of these areas. The challenge of street litter in areas such as Wingrove can largely be traced to a lack of funding and legal tools to enforce against the private sector.

In response to these issues, the report suggests some ways in which local government can improve the way it works with citizens and communities in order to accelerate the agenda of enabling and facilitating the community and civic sectors. In particular, it considers the potential of community mapping and digital technology to be used as methods capable of sharing experience and promoting co-operation between communities and local government. Such methods seek to concentrate more limited resources on community priorities and find ways of mobilising community action as a means of confronting permissive regulatory cultures. These suggestions and others are itemised at the end of the report.



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Introduction

The austerity politics which have dominated the UK since the 2010 election, and the focusing of cuts on less affluent local authorities, have re-politicised the way in which services are thought about and delivered, challenging the assumption that environmental waste is an issue that can just be left to paid staff to deal with. The unprecedented scale of the cuts facing authorities such as Newcastle upon Tyne has forced them to innovate with alternatives to privatisation that often emphasise, and seek to politicise, community as a mechanism for achieving public goals. Variation in the way that local authorities are doing this shows that, even against a backdrop of austerity, there is scope to express local political values through the reformed relationship that is being constructed between local government and communities.

There are arguments that high levels of street litter and environmental degradation may reflect a lack of pride in and ownership of the immediate environment in which people live. This was a theme of New Labour's ambition for a "stakeholder society" and of both Ed Milliband and Jeremy Corbyn's leadership agenda. If people feel alienated by the provision of services to them, whether because of a remote and profit-maximising private sector or because of an unresponsive public sector, then they may feel a lack of attachment to place and environment and this may be reflected in a carelessness towards it. The objective of encouraging user control therefore has the potential not only to encourage environmental citizenship but also to lead to pressure to match services more closely with the needs, desires and material interests of those they affect.

There are therefore good reasons to explore and innovate with ways of managing street litter and the local environment that are community-based and have principles of advocacy and co-operation at their heart. Not least among them is the scale of the street litter problems facing Newcastle City Council, particularly in the least affluent areas of the city. To a large extent, these have been revealed by severe budget cuts which, despite attempts to maintain higher levels of services in more deprived areas, have still led to serious reductions. Street sweeping teams have been reduced and mechanised, bin collections have moved from weekly to fortnightly, charges have been introduced for bulky refuse collection and area regeneration teams have been abolished.

In this climate there has been a rush to innovate with service provision and to experiment with various 'upstream' initiatives aimed at reducing demand. Newcastle Council's 2020 group agenda seeks to find cost savings while maintaining services through initiatives such as replacing wheeled bins with large, communal bins. Newcastle's involvement with the Global Awareness in Action initiative led to the commissioning of a digital artist to work in the east and west ends of the city to explore creative ways of raising environmental awareness with young people. Similar efforts have been made by local authorities elsewhere in the UK, with experiences being shared through the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network. However, the pace of cuts and the lack of warning given to local authorities by central government about their scale makes it more difficult to plan, while attempts to manage demand are often unreliable and can take a long time to feed through. Transient communities are also recognised as some of the most difficult to work with as successful attempts to change behaviour can dissipate as households move on. While the alternative approach of embarking on large-scale service restructuring can yield immediate results, it can also be perceived as something that is imposed on communities, leading to effects on social and human capital that are difficult to build into the process of service planning.

The Wingrove area

The dynamics of the Wingrove area of Newcastle have been slightly different to other parts of the east and west ends of Newcastle for two main reasons. One is a very active local commitment to co-operative working, both among Councillors and local residents, which led to the creation of the Greening Wingrove community co-operative and has helped to build local dialogue and capacity. Secondly, and often supporting this, the success of a bid to the Big Lottery's Communities Living Sustainably fund has resulted in around a million pounds being spent in the area between 2013 and 2017, with much of this being spent on efforts to change local behaviour **aNo table of contents entries found.**nd address environmental and climate change objectives. The WEA Greening Wingrove project was set up as a special purpose partnership charged with spending this money effectively and distinct from the Greening Wingrove community co-operative. Funding from the lottery, together with support from the ward committee and match funding from Locality, paid for a community organiser to knock on doors and hold conversations with residents between July and December 2015. Over 850 residences were visited and full 'listenings' were completed with 175 residents. 'Litter, rubbish and rats' was the top concern raised by 97 residents with the next nearest being the 'state of the back lanes/ flytipping' which was raised by 40 residents. These concerns are matched by the council's experience of waste in the area, with around 800 tonnes of street litter being removed from the electoral ward every year. Efforts to address the problems have included litter picks, community meetings, growing sessions and garden festivals.

Part one: "Reclaim the Lanes" – exploring behaviour change through action research

Reclaim the lanes came about through a chance meeting of two local residents at an alley makeover workshop day hosted by Middlesbrough Environment City in October 2014. The event showcased efforts by communities to turn back lanes and alleys into useable outdoor spaces for growing and socialising rather than left over spaces used for little other than waste management, and these included the efforts of Mavis Arnold and others in Longford Street (see figure one). These ventures bore similarities with Vancouver's 'country lanes' initiative, which in turn had inspired the vision to 'green Wingrove', partly as a means of addressing litter and neglect in the area. From the alley makeover workshop, an idea evolved to try and encourage existing, low-level uses of the back lanes as play spaces. Over time it became clear that a lot of capacity for change existed in the form of young people who are often left to their own devices in the area.

Funding from the WEA Greening Wingrove project led to eight sessions during 2015/16 in which local residents volunteered, with assistance from the CHAT Trust, to take youth activities outdoors and broaden them beyond the trust's usual 13 – 21 year old client group. This began with two 'diagnostic' sessions, which aimed to test out the reaction to having music and activities outside and also to collect feedback on what the young people liked and didn't like about their area. Litter came out as a prominent concern of many of the young people and small plants and decorative bushes were highlighted as nice things about the back lane. Despite this the CHAT trust was experiencing petty vandalism of plants within its back yard as well as endemic littering. Subsequent activities did not focus directly on these negative issues but sought to generate community interest and encourage play and creativity. Some growing activities and food were also introduced. These activities are summarised in appendix one.

Figure one: the back alley at Longford Street, Middlesbrough following community efforts to turn it around



Source: North East Alley Gardens Network

The sessions throughout 2015/6 followed a trial and error process, alternating with review meetings held between the three organisers during which observations and reflections were shared along with ideas for new activities that would stimulate interest and prompt reactions. In this way, the activities were used as a mode of communication that was less dependent on the need to speak English. Surprise and uncertainty were common initial reactions to the use of the back lane in this way, but after a few sessions it became a normal and expected thing to do. Particularly among some of the younger children there was a lot of excitement and anticipation of upcoming events, while for parents and adults the outlook was slower to change. The need to take names and addresses to demonstrate attendance to funders initially met a very guarded reaction, with some adults refusing to give their details, however by June of 2016 adults in the Slovakian community were offering to be interviewed on tape as part of the project and were visibly happy to be involved. A key outcome of the community engagement process was therefore the development of trust and visibility despite the inability of the event organisers to communicate verbally without a translator. A drawback of the first year's activities was nevertheless the lack of a visible difference to the physical appearance of the back lane.

Following the conclusion of events in summer 2015, funding was secured which paid for a four month, part-time secondment to the CHAT trust by one of the initial organisers. The objectives of this secondment were to explore the potential of the work which had already taken place, both for

achieving sustainable physical change to the lane's environment and for informing the design of wider innovations in service delivery. The project began by focusing on young people engaged with CHAT, many of whom had been involved in providing music at the Reclaim the Lanes events. A result of this was an increased focus on the Slovakian community as these made up the majority of the local users of CHAT activities. Hire of a translator and a visit to a climbing wall was used as an initial way of being introduced to the young people through CHAT as a trusted gatekeeper. A number of further attempts were then made to build on this relationship, as documented in appendix two. Efforts were made to build on the GAIA digital artist in residence project, although this was principally undertaken with young people living in the neighbouring Benwell area rather than residents of the immediate area around the CHAT trust building. The main, lasting effect of this work was the mindset and community status of the young people involved and the music video 'respect the streets', which became a local anthem with younger children who would regularly sing and hum it even when the musicians themselves were absent.

The engagement process

Appendix two also details the pro-active efforts which were made to build links with the adult residents on the street, for example through door knocking and chance conversations. Home Housing offered free paint and materials and a private landlord provided a pressure sprayer to prepare the CHAT trust wall for repainting. Young people involved with CHAT took part in repainting the wall and some expressed an interest in graffiti, which led to the co-design and co-painting of a mural on the wall and on the side of the CHAT trust building. Some activities were by their nature relatively strongly led by the organisers, for example the contracting of a professional street clean of the lane followed by guided pothole repairs with smaller children or the collective contribution of children to banners and flags whose design was steered by an artist. Other activities were able to be more directed by the young people: the use of temporary, chalk-based spray paint provided a way of allowing young people to freely experiment with designs for the back lane prior to an artist being commissioned to help them make the designs permanent. These designs had the additional impact of providing a talking point to assist discussions held during doorstep conversations. Initial attempts to run a planter-making workshop proved impractical but the provision of wooden planters made locally from recycled palettes both allowed free choice of plants and also proved to be an effective way of opening up conversations with residents about issues on the street. Some efforts, such as a time swap fence and wall painting session were simply hampered with poor weather while on other occasions, some of the simplest and unplanned activities proved most popular with younger kids aged around 5 to 13. Washing off temporary graffiti and taking part in street cleans were cited as some of the most rewarding experiences by these children.

A result of these activities was the gradual development of a relationship with young people living on the street and nearby and a process of learning about activities that were both practical and valued. The use of a deep clean prompted discussions around why the street reverted back to its messy state, with a significant trigger for this being an unofficial strike by council refuse workers which meant bins lay empty and overflowing. The local promotion of CHAT Trust as a source of social control and a place to report instances of low level vandalism or turning over of wheelie bins led to a number of productive discussions about sources of waste. These were to some extent captured by the production of a social map of the street, underpinned by the provision of a family photographer at the community events. The social map was an experiment with making neighbours more visible as a way of potentially mobilising community knowledge through self-governed community surveillance. It was nevertheless difficult to act on sources of community knowledge because some residents were afraid of reporting incidents and often the claims could be easily refuted.

Figure two: singing at Reclaim the Lanes' tenth event



Source: author's own photograph

Figure three: co-painting a mural on the CHAT Trust wall



Source: author's own photograph

One of the most contentious of the proposed interventions into the street was the use of CCTV with the intention of gathering evidence about fly tippers from outside the area and also as a means of identifying and engaging with those depositing bulky refuse in the lane behind their flat. No residents of the street claimed to be against the use of cameras to address fly tipping, although its use to impose fines on residents would have created division and undermined trust. Three residents on the street were very strongly in favour of using fines and cameras and this attitude was in all cases combined with a view that the Slovakian community was responsible for the litter problems. Littering was part of a problematic range of behaviours including late night singing and rowdiness. These three residents also did not support the engagement work being done with young people as they felt it would not change behaviour and that it attracted young people with problematic behaviour to the area. However, it should be pointed out that at least one of these households was themselves a source of litter in the back lane. While CCTV turned out to be impractical the question of whether, in principle, CCTV would be constructive troubled the project organisers not least because of its tendency to centralise enforcement and detach it from individuals, as well as its potential to undermine trust within relationships that had taken a long while to build. The use of CCTV by an external organisation such as the council may have been less problematic but, paradoxically, is more tightly controlled by legislation which also significantly increases the associated costs.

Working principles

In practice, the issues around CCTV illustrated tensions within the broadly communitarian basis of the engagement strategy. Reflection on this strategy distils it down to around four principles which not only served to build relationships in a context where there was no common language but which, in doing so, emphasised the centrality of trust as the valued component of those relationships. These principles can be summarised as:

i) Action before plan

While some of the activities held did ask for ideas from those involved, the general approach to working involved testing collective responses to interventions. This allowed for the probing of such issues as the social atmosphere of the lane, the longevity of street cleans or the durability of planters and murals.

ii) Debate through action and reflection

There are phenomenological arguments that verbal debates about abstract issues are problematic since they require those involved to independently imagine the hypothetical scenarios they are discussing. By contrast, reflection on practice might arguably allow for participants to get closer to a common experience. It also allows for physical, emotional and behavioural action to be read-off from that experience and in doing so it potentially widens debate beyond a focus on rational predictions.

iii) Encouraged appropriation

A key aim of the activities undertaken was to move from directed engagement towards a series of activities that might be taken up by others in the community. This ethic was embodied in all of the activities which were undertaken, none of which simply provided improvements for the community. Towards the end of the project there were increasing signs of residents beginning to move from participation towards taking more of a leading role in shaping and delivering their own activities.

iv) Self-government as the basis for building trust

The promotion of self-government therefore entails an attempt to pass on an internalised ethic of participation which must be re-established according to each individual's own terms. Placing trust at the heart of a process in this way requires a commitment to self-responsibility that can easily be jeopardised by the introduction of more coercive attempts to govern places and communities. An ongoing commitment is therefore required to warding against drift away from this principle. This was most clearly illustrated by the dilemmas posed by the use of CCTV which, by its nature, involves the surveillance and attempted regulation of others' behaviour from a privileged vantage point.

These principles to a large extent reflect a way of working which had already been established by the CHAT trust, with the difference being their more visible introduction into the local environment and as a means of engaging with the adult population. A common criticism of community-based approaches to neighbourhood governance is that they are difficult to sustain and require constant intervention. The use of art and objects from murals to planters represented an experiment with increasing the durability of such intervention, but as a methodology it also brought challenges. The most significant of these was the sense of time according to which many young people lived their lives and the level of importance which the environment has within those lives. While both music and environmental change require a certain level of skill to be developed, projects aimed at changing the environment often required relatively long lead-in times and preparation. Those projects that were most popular were often those that could be mobilised quickly, as with a guitar or keyboard, when the time was right. This was not to say that the environment was unimportant but that linking it to young people required experimentation with a new set of skills and considerations.

One of the positive consequences of these experiments was the effect of engaging with teenage young people on younger children and on parents. Primary school aged children were particularly enthusiastic about engaging in things they felt were benefiting the community, while parents were keen to observe and support their sons and daughters. As a result of this engagement some valuable information is now being collected about how people are used to dealing with waste, their misunderstandings of the expectations of systems in Newcastle and their views about how to improve these. Views are also being generated about how littering can be tackled in the Slovak, Asian and white communities and how to address racist accusations that only Slovaks are responsible for the litter problem. Interestingly, the initial results bear close similarities with desires in the wider community for a greener and cleaner environment. This work is ongoing, with the aim of recruiting community activists from the Slovak population who may be able to organise and represent their interests.

Part two: understanding cultures of littering through an action research approach

A second, interrelated aspect of the secondment was to investigate issues of street litter and the local environment from an advocacy-based perspective and with a focus on the systems of service provision people depend on. This built not only on work within the back lane adjacent to the CHAT Trust but also on broader engagement across the Wingrove area. Being out and about and visible in the area led to opportunistic encounters with residents, private landlords, council and community sector staff working in the area, during which environmental issues were discussed. There was an additional benefit of independence here, which makes possible a different relationship than that which exists between a resident and a council worker or councillor. Working with the area's community organiser, almost all local retailers in the Arthur's Hill streets were approached, totalling twenty-eight traders, and this led to deeper discussions with fifteen. Broader discussions were had as part of community meetings held by Greening Wingrove community co-operative. This approach to engaging with local stakeholders differed from earlier efforts by the council to bring the behaviours of residents and others in line with the requirements of council systems, see for example appendix three, in that it began from a position which was capable of questioning the design of the systems themselves and doing so, not on the basis of statistics but on qualitative investigation into the delivery of services on the ground.

Council services

The conversations with residents of the back lane next to the CHAT Trust indicated that street littering was only part of the problem, with other issues including the lack of capacity of street bins and the regular theft of green wheeled bins. Language issues and cultural differences led to limited recycling by many residents and the removal of regularly contaminated recycling bins effectively meant the halving of a household's bin capacity. Lack of knowledge about when to put out bins meant they were more likely to be stolen or moved. Slovak residents without a wheeled bin wrongly believed that there was a charge for ordering a replacement and could not, in any event, navigate the council's systems without the help of an English speaking assistant. This seems to partly account for the over-use of the street bins, although the presence of large families in flats may also have placed more pressure on these bins. A freedom of information act request to Newcastle City Council revealed that requests to deal with overflowing street bins are not acted upon, meaning that the capacity of street bins is effectively fixed and not able to deal with any additional pressure placed on them.

Figure four shows the efforts of a local convenience store to increase the capacity of the street bin, which was very often overflowing. While their efforts were informally supported by council staff who emptied the green bin alongside the street bin, staff in the shop complained that the bin became a magnet for household rubbish and so filled up very quickly. Elsewhere, some residents pointed out that street bin capacity had been reduced by the removal of bins. An example of this was to the top of Brighton Grove on the west side, near the corner with the West Road. While google street view pictures these bins, they now no longer exist. However a freedom of information act request enquiring about the removal of street bins received a response stating that there was no programme of removal.

Figure four: informal efforts indicate a need for more bin capacity



Source: author's photograph

The problem of lack of waste capacity also extends to the issue of bulky refuse. Of those Slovaks we spoke to, there was no awareness of the existence of household waste recycling centres, while a lack of car ownership also limits access to these by those on low incomes. The council operates a bulky waste collection service but unlike the recycling centres, which are free, this involves a minimum charge of £10 for one large item and requires residents to be aware of and able to use a web-based service in English. There are consequently ambitions by Greening Wingrove community co-operative to test the use of a co-operative collection service that can be organised through word of mouth and may involve a much smaller charge, potentially saving the council money that might otherwise be spent clearing up back lanes.

One of the early outcomes of interviews with Slovak residents, despite many working in areas where they were paid below the minimum wage, was strong support for the use of enforcement and fines for those who dump rubbish in the back lanes. However, given the lack of understanding about the correct processes for disposal of waste, it is unclear whether residents realise that they could be fined for leaving bin bags and bulky refuse in the back lane. These issues were, however, raised by local traders, with most traders being able to point to receiving large fines for relatively minor infringements while seeing others flouting the rules and going unpunished. This led to a loss of faith in, and less willingness to work with, the council as a result. Of the more serious offenders, some residents referred to particular households as being problematic and tending to simply push bulky rubbish over the back wall into the lane as a way of disposing of it, and on one occasion this led to rubbish landing on top of an enforcement officer's car. There is therefore an issue of differentiating between households who are attempting to operate an imperfect system but getting it wrong and others who are ignoring expectations completely and simply offloading responsibility onto the council. The difficulties this raises may become increasingly problematic for an enforcement service which is under ever more pressure to demonstrate 'results' and cover part of its own costs, since officers referred to the need to take a zero-tolerance approach that did not discriminate, and also referred to the ethical difficulties this sometimes created for them.

The existence of the grey area described above is the consequence of service designs which, often despite the best efforts of council officers, do not reflect the capabilities and expectations of those using them. Deciding whether or not enforcement is in the public interest becomes a difficult judgement, particularly where the facts are not clear and this potentially leads to strong arguments for the use of CCTV. Indeed, pilots with the use of CCTV in High Cross have anecdotally led to much cleaner back lanes. A better fit of services with user needs would not eradicate the misuse of particular systems but could potentially make the task of enforcement more clear-cut.

Privately run services

While council services could be better adapted in places to deal with the specific characteristics of areas like Wingrove, there is also a persistent flow of litter and waste which falls to the council to collect as a result of negligence of responsibilities from some retailers and some private landlords. As figure four demonstrates, there were examples of retailers going beyond their responsibilities and this was also the case with two landlords who actively supported the reclaim the lanes work. However absentee landlordism in particular is associated with minimal-cost housing management which often leaves new tenants to deal with waste left by outgoing residents and with no advice or funding to help them to do this. In many cases this results in the back lanes becoming destinations for this rubbish. While these issues do not only affect less affluent areas they are more likely to have

a higher proportion of absentee landlordism and residents may be less likely to complain. These are issues that have been regularly flagged up by local councillors and residents on social media.

Similar issues surround retailers who consistently leave trade waste in the areas around their premises and visible to other retailers, who expressed frustration at their apparent ability to flout the rules. In many cases these were relatively new businesses likely to be operating at lower margins than those in more affluent parts of the city. However, in one case a business had become so successful that its premises were no longer able to cope with the volume of waste being generated. There were instances of shops 'piggybacking' onto others with larger waste contracts and informal co-operatives which had apparently never been engaged by enforcement. In other cases, changes to the physical environment are compounding the issues above by making the management of waste increasingly difficult. Local residents highlighted examples of both retail and residential premises where the outdoor space left for housing waste bins had been developed or removed from the tenants, leaving bins constantly in the back lanes, although some properties never appear to have had these spaces in the first place. However, no audit has yet been done of the scale of this problem or the reasons why such development has not been controlled.

Figure five: trade waste contracts are often not sufficient to deal with the scale of retail refuse



Source: author's own photograph

Two particular issues seem to prevent the tighter regulation of retailers that consistently leave rubbish in back and front lanes, or vulnerable to being blown into the streets. One is the belief that rubbish must be observed leaving a premises or blowing out of a trade waste bin before action can be taken, another is the tendency of businesses to temporarily tighten up on processes if approached, only to revert a matter of weeks later on. The perceived onus on enforcement officers to be present at the point where a piece of litter moves from the private to the public domain renders enforcement all but absent from many of the areas where the most prolific offending takes place. This in turn allows these practices to continue and leads to a culture of finger pointing among retailers who are sensitive to being unfairly treated while others continue unchallenged. A result of this is the addition of further litter to the back lanes and a financial burden on the council associated with meeting its statutory duty to clear and clean the streets. Such behaviour is in large part a direct result of a lack of regulation which is appropriate to tackling the specific, place-based problems of the terraced parts of Newcastle.

Addressing issues of street litter and degradation in Wingrove and beyond

There is a need for central government to recognise, not only that less affluent neighbourhoods are likely to require more resources if they are to be managed effectively, but also that the source of these costs can in many cases be attributed to the offloading of private responsibilities onto the public sector. Of course, the situation is not clear cut and issues such as language differences do also introduce additional costs and difficulties. But even without a common language, it remains possible to communicate, to build trust and to share experiences in ways that can identify problems more clearly and lead to possible responses. This requires a cultural and mindset change in the way services have traditionally been delivered and a shift away from relying principally on centrally collected statistics towards valuing other forms of knowledge and incorporating them into the way services are designed for different areas. Unless this change is achieved, there is a danger of a perception arising that the community has little influence and this can have a serious, negative effect on people's behaviour, potential at a scale which rivals the council's own ability to clean up and enforce. While the increased attention towards governing through community brings risks it also creates opportunities to re-open ways of working which may have at some point been closed down, for example, through deregulation constraining local authority powers. By combining community initiative with existing legal powers it may be possible to set out a more progressive approach to local working, capable of identifying and finding ways to break free of the systemic reasons for certain behaviours.

Many of the potential policy implications arising from this research are strongly implicit in the issues discussed above. However, it is important to focus on what makes this approach significantly different from previous ways of attempting to tackle environmental issues. This lies in an attempt to root debate about services in the lived experiences of those they affect. Rather than being a one-off intervention, there needs to be an ongoing dialogue coupled with a search for ways of exploiting community knowledge and action in order to ensure local priorities are addressed more effectively. There are dangers in relying solely on information technology to do this, as it can exclude sections of the community. However, the current need in Newcastle to replace its envirocall system for reporting environmental incidents creates an opportunity to implement a new system that places more emphasis on community debate about how services can be made more effective through co-operation. A suggested draft brief for the creation of a system along these lines is attached as appendix four of this report.

Figure six: Young people helping on the pre-deep clean litter pick



Source: author's own photograph

Figure seven: the co-designed, co-produced CHAT Trust mural being unveiled by Chi Onwurah MP



Source: photography courtesy of The CHAT Trust

Conclusions and suggestions

At a chance meeting back in February, one resident's response to hearing about the project to reclaim the back lane in Wingrove was "yee've got neigh chance" but the progress made since then shows that direct environmental change may be slow, but it is possible and the momentum is growing. One of the shop owners we spoke to was so disillusioned with the litter problem in the area that she was convinced nothing would ever persuade the council to work with residents and that even discussing the issue was a waste of time. These attitudes underline the importance of trying new ways of working that give local people a chance of influence and they show the potential pent up energy that could be released by implementing a different approach. Ultimately, the experiences of people in Wingrove show that the council can no longer expect to be able to control everything that happens in the area, therefore winning over the hearts and minds of local people will be essential if real change is to be achieved.

A hallmark of the Reclaim the Lanes approach used in Wingrove is the engagement of people in not just influencing, but directly taking part in delivering change in their environment. This is significantly different from, for example, seeking to educate people about how to use waste collection services that have been designed by others. We also found that some of the biggest difficulties to achieving change arose from being unable to influence or adapt the systems used in the area. While these are now being reformed there is a feeling that this has happened without the input of local views and knowledge. There is a danger that this could alienate people and undermine efforts to build community capacity.

Concerns about the introduction of the new communal bins which have been raised by residents via Greening Wingrove, and illustrated with the experiences of the High Cross area, show that experiences in one part of the city may be very different to another. Care is needed to ensure that their introduction leads to an improvement. One of the advantages of the Reclaim the Lanes project is the extent of the community connections now built up, meaning that any pilot of communal bins in the area could benefit from intensive reports of how they are received and used by residents on the street. A pilot such as this would build on Reclaim the Lanes' "action first" approach and demonstrate a commitment to active engagement with and support of the community.

A number of other possibilities also arise for strengthening the relationship between the council and local people, some of which have already been suggested to or are being explored by Greening Wingrove. These are now being discussed with local councillors and others in the area. They include:

- The use of the same back lane focused on through "Reclaim the Lanes" as a pilot area for introducing communal bins ahead of other streets, allowing for **a community-led study** of differences in the system when compared with areas in the east or outer west of the city and helping to address fears from some residents about the risks with introducing the new system.
- There is a significant cost to the council of collecting fly tipped rubbish as well as bulky waste disposed of in the back lanes by residents, but the existing systems make it difficult for residents to understand and use the existing systems cost effectively. The council could work with local residents to make provision for **a community-led system for disposing of bulky waste refuse** which is publicised through word of mouth and is cheap to operate. This may mean making the former Nuns Moor allotments waste area available to a community business as a temporary waste storage facility. Slovakian residents of the area have suggested that this person could also act as a link worker with their community to improve knowledge of waste systems and help represent concerns to the council and others.

- A review of the effects of an overall lack of waste capacity available to residents on the provision of street litter bins. An increase in takeaways is also leading to overflowing bins. Rather than simply reviewing bin provision, the council should consider drawing on community knowledge to assist them. This might mean experimenting with strapping temporary wheelie bins to existing bins that may need enlarging and asking for community feedback on where provision should be enhanced. This could have the added benefit of ***engaging people in local issues and encouraging activism and concern for the local environment.***
- The council is currently fighting a losing battle against a minority of shop owners who store waste in a loose form in the back lanes or in front yards. ***Community mapping*** of these incidents, with input from both council officers and local residents, could be used to encourage residents to speak to these shop owners and try to agree a voluntary contract of acceptable conduct. There is already officer support for this proposal and ways need to be found of exploring how it can be taken forward with the community. This may partly depend on developing a website to record information.
- Work on community mapping could also be combined with ***community prioritisation of enforcement***, to help address some of the difficulties outlined earlier around targeting the worst offenders and supporting others to maintain standards and report problems.
- A website and associated app could be used to ***democratise the envirocall system*** and stimulate ideas for shared approaches to tackling local environmental issues. A draft brief, specifying this kind of system is attached as appendix four and productive discussions about introducing this have already been had with a number of key local politicians.

These suggestions are now being subject to wider discussions with local Councillors, community representatives and others in the Wingrove area. It is important to stress that it is not the detail of whether or not any of these particular ideas are taken up by community groups and the local authority that matters. What is more important is that the kinds of dialogue which are opened up by these proposals are built on as a means of building solidarity now and in the future. The danger is that the alternative will mean not only reduced service provision for poorer parts of the city but increasing disillusionment. Now is a real chance to establish Newcastle's alternative to privatisation and austerity.

Appendix one – schedule of sessions in 2015-16

Session 1 – 6th June

- Local resident/ cook Martha provided a barbeque, salad and home made lemonade
- We had chalk available and asked the kids to decorate the back lanes with ideas; we then took photos of these.
- We showed the same power point we had used at the public voting event to ask for funding for the project, this gave the kids ideas about how the back lane could change.
- We had an artist-photographer, who liaised with Stephanie (a PhD student working at CHAT and based at Durham University anthropology) to borrow 10 digital cameras. The artist then printed out and gave the prints to the kids. This enabled us to get a kids-eye view of what changes they would like to see to the back lane.
- We had music, provided by teenagers from the local area/ CHAT trust facilitated by local youth worker Paddy, and a gazebo

Session 2 – 25th July Saturday

- We had Rachel the artist make a wall hanging with the children. This was of the back lane and when finished it had “Reclaim the Lanes” embroidered on it.
- Dave made a barbeque and cooked sausages, as the kids had said they liked hot dogs
- Paddy facilitated music again

Session 3 – 12th August Wed

- Street games (mainly boxing) were provided by clive: a youth worker linked with CHAT
- Local vertical vegger Mat made various wall hangings based on childrens’ own ideas
- Dave built a basketball stand with hoop out of locally fly tipped waste, and played basketball with the kids
- We had chilli plants from Una at the community garden to give away
- CHAT band Gypsy Primark ran the music themselves, with the aid of the CHAT trust youth workers, and played on an old rug that had been flytipped in the adjacent back lane

Session 4 – 22nd August Saturday

- CHAT band Gypsy Primark ran the music again
- Local artist Andy assembled the kids to make a wall hanging of a big tree made of hands
- Caroline and Daniel from CHAT trust played parachute games
- Local resident Stanna assisted to help translate Slovakian
- The basketball hoop was used again
- Matt helped kids to paint some old plant pots Dave had been given and plant up mint to take home

2nd September Wednesday

- Circus theme: this session was run mainly by local circus people
- Another banner was made
- Music by Gypsy Primark
- Basket ball

26th September Saturday – international music and residents beyond Slovak

- This session was mainly co-ordinate by local resident and youth worker Paddy
- A huge 'refugees welcome' banner was hung across the back lane
- The kids made bunting and this was hung across the back lane
- A tarpaulin structure was erected across the back lane
- All the wall hangings created in previous weeks were hung up on back walls facing the lane
- The local press arrived, as well as local Councillors and council staff
- Three different bands played, blending English and Slovakian music
- Plants were selected that could be pushed into crevices in the back lane walls and these were handed out to children and their parents

Session 7 – Feb 13th Saturday

- Gypsy gomez played in the gazebo
- A big brother consultation space was tried out inside using digital camera, laptop and reclaimed armchair
- Edible cycles provided soup and salad under the canopy
- Planter making session
- One basketball hoop
- There was the premier of Karen Kitsch and the unczeched's film/ music video indoors

Session 8 – March 30th Wednesday (half term)

- Gypsy Gomez provided the sound with full amplification
- Justine and helpers from Artventurers made flags to raise at the next events, they also designed up a mosaic to be constructed at a future event
- Helen planted pots and planters and Dave installed planters on peoples' back walls
- The new canopy was installed
- The consultation tent was tried out, this time outside under a tarpaulin
- The wall behind CHAT had been painted by the young people
- There was basketball installed outside
- There was real Italian pizza cooked by Giuseppe

The above list is not comprehensive and there were also other activities which have not been listed here. JET had a presence at the last event, Ryder HKS architectures showed an interest, the local community police officer came along and there were activities contributed by other youth organisations not listed here.

Appendix two – timeline of activities undertaken during the secondment

February

- Reclaim the lanes 8, including design of consultation booth and planter-making session
- Interviews with street traders, and 'on the street' chats with enforcement officers, bin collectors, police
- Community meeting about communal bins and street traders
- Telephone interview with Karen Underhill
- Meeting with Home Housing
- Securing consent of property owners and beginning to build up a map of residents and owners on the street
- Search for translation support

March

- Climbing trip to Byker wall
- Explored CCTV
- Bootlegger music video session
- Design of app and website; outlandish fellowship application
- Attempts to arrange time exchange painting sessions
- Ongoing identification and reporting of environmental incidents
- Development of app via app movement
- Cleaning and painting of CHAT Trust wall
- Reclaim the Lanes 9

April

- Field trip
- Organising large mural
- Development of website and mural design through discussions with FPS Studios
- Installation of planters
- CHAT closed for half term
- Basketball brackets

May

- More planters
- Street clean in back lane with the kids
- Deep clean in the back lane
- Reclaim the Lanes 10
- Back lane monitoring
- Street chalk painting
- Resident consultation and mapping
- Zaneta first interview

June

- Installed last two planters
- Mural unveiling with local politicians
- Attempted to organise resident-led litter pick
- Development of street chalk painting into permanent mural
- Progression of a second, sub-mural on a different site
- Further development of community mapping of the street

Appendix three - Environmental Engagement Projects undertaken in Wingrove Ward back lanes by Newcastle City Council

1. September 2008 – the environmental engagement team went out with the blue bin delivery crews to engage with residents as the new bins were being delivered. They met residents on the doorstep to explain the new recycling service, how bins should be stored and how to access bulky article collections and other council services.
2. September 2008 - Roadshows were held at a couple of different points on the West Road to meet residents and help them understand the new recycling service and also prompted residents to store bins correctly, to contact the council about bulky article collections and other council services.
3. September and October 2008 – the team door knocked the ‘Wingrove’ streets to help identify who also needed green refuse bins. These bins were delivered while on site to properties that required them. Those properties that had not moved their blue bins from the front door where they were delivered were provided with a reminder about the service being a back lane service. Any remaining blue bins left in front streets for a period of time, due to properties being unoccupied, were removed.
4. Between November 2008 and January 2012 – the engagement team visited every Arthur’s Hill and Wingrove back lanes fortnightly and tagged the blue recycling bins that were found to be contaminated on the day before collection. The tag told people what the problem was and alerted crews not to empty that bin. The main contamination was found to be food waste or black bags of general waste in the blue bin. Those contaminated bins were then emptied separately to enable the resident to start again.
 - a. If another tag was required within the next 6 months the team would visit the resident with pictorial information to explain how to recycle correctly.
 - b. If, following a conversation with the resident, the bins were contaminated again within a 6 months period the blue bin was removed.

- c. From tagging bins it was found that a high proportion of bins remained uncontaminated for a 6 – 9 month period. It was usually due to change of tenants that caused a subsequent issue.
 - d. All residents spoken to were reminded to keep bins in back yards and only placed out on the day of collection.
 - e. Regular bin counts were undertaken in back lanes and those properties with identifiable bins left out had a flyer delivered to remind them to keep their bins on their property other than on collection day.
5. December 2008 – A generic take bins in leaflet was delivered to all properties along with another copy of the bin day calendar to remind residents about collection dates.
 6. January 2009 - blue bins that had continued to be used incorrectly were removed from properties. Approximately 26 bins were removed and a leaflet was delivered to these properties telling them why they had been removed. They were able to contact the council to request blue bin if they wished to recycle correctly.
 7. April 2009 'Little Wasters' were funded to carry out a campaign in Wingrove back lanes on behalf of NCC. Using a questionnaire and discussions on the door step this included explaining the recycling service, the importance of recycling, checked whether properties had a green bin and whether bins were being left out. They also tried to ensure residents knew exactly what to do with their household and bulky waste, including accessing the Envirocall system.

a. Outcomes relating to Contamination

Pre Little Wasters from 23/01/09 up until 11/4/09 (Wingroves and Arthur's Hill):

Wingrove Road – 20 reports of contamination

Wingrove Avenue – 38 reports of contamination

Nunsmoor Road – 0 reports of contamination

Wingrove Gardens – 0 reports of contamination

Hadrian Road – 1 reports of contamination

Severus Road – 0 reports of contamination

Post Little Wasters from 15/5/09 up until 28/7/09:

Wingrove Road – 26 reports of contamination, 2 bins removed due to continued misuse
Wingrove Avenue – 17 reports of contamination
Wingrove Gardens – 7 reports of contamination
Nunsmoor Road – 0 report of contamination
Hadrian Road – 0 reports of contamination
Severus Road – 0 reports of contamination

Pre Little Wasters from 18/2/09 up until 1/5/09 (Spital Tongues):

Belle Grove Terrace – 1 report of contamination
Belle Grove Avenue – 0 reports of contamination
Belle Grove Villas – 1 report of contamination, 2 recorded bins removed
Hunters Place – 3 reports of contamination, 1 recorded bin removed
Oxnam Crescent – 0 reports of contamination
Wallace Street – 0 report of contamination
Morpeth Street – 1 reports of contamination
Cross Morpeth Street – 0 report of contamination

Post Little Wasters form 27/5/09 up until 7/8/09:

Belle Grove Terrace – 2 reports of contamination
Belle Grove Avenue – 0 reports of contamination
Belle Grove Villas – 0 reports of contamination
Hunters Place – 0 reports of contamination
Oxnam Crescent – 0 reports of contamination
Wallace Street – 1 report of contamination
Morpeth Street – 5 reports of contamination, 1 bin removed
Cross Morpeth Street – 1 report of contamination

- b. Of the 583 properties listed, 6% proved to be non-residential or clearly empty properties. Another 22 houses were allegedly missed out of the recycling roll out and so had no service. Of the remaining 528 houses, 66% were spoken to. This rate of contact was only achieved after up to 6 visits per household.
- c. As a result of the work 349 individual householders were spoken to and:
 - 33 recycling bins were requested to replace ones that had been lost or stolen;
 - 2 additional recycling bins were requested for larger properties;
 - 19 green refuse bins that had been lost or stolen were re-ordered;
 - 5 replacement recycling bin caddies were requested;
 - 44 replacement recycling calendars were delivered; and
 - 22 properties that had been missed out of the original blue bin recycling service roll out were identified.
- d. 88% of residents contacted had used their blue recycling bin. 12% were not participating in the recycling service because they had had no bin delivered or a bin had been lost or stolen. In addition, 8 residents had never recycled before even though they had a blue bin. Of these, 5 were persuaded to participate in the service, 1 had no access to his back yard and so could not take a bin but recycled at the local supermarket and only 2 people were determined non-recyclers, one for reason of time and one for the reason of age.
- e. The overwhelming majority of people who took part in the survey were positive about recycling, the ease of the system provided by the new blue bins and the delivery of the service by the city council workforce. 75% of residents had no problems with the blue bin and, indeed, found the service convenient and easy to use.
- f. Two colourful 'Winning in Wingrove' newsletters were delivered with information about the service, the crews who deliver it a 5 question quiz with prizes. This highlighted the days to recycle, what to recycle and what not to recycle. The quiz was delivered to all 349 households contacted and, to date, 52 quizzes were returned.
- g. As part of the door knocking householders were asked, without prompting, to state what items they were recycling in their blue bin. Any items missed or any incorrect items listed were then highlighted by the canvasser. Cans and plastic bottles were the two most recycled items at 61% and 56% respectively. This was followed by glass bottles and jars at 52%, cardboard and newspapers at 38% each, paper at 30% and magazines at 21%.
- h. According to the results, more than one in three of respondents (35%) did not realise that only plastic bottles should be recycled through the blue bin service. 30% of householders were not aware that glass and batteries should only be placed in the top caddy. 27% did not realise that recyclates did not need to be bagged before being put in the bin and 21% of residents did not know that overflow bags for excess materials should not be used and placed on top of or next to the bins. One household volunteered that they were putting food

waste in their bin. Three residents raised the issue of third party bin contamination. One resident reported that she had stopped recycling because other people had used her bin as a general waste bin and she had been blamed for it. In addition, she was not prepared to remove other people's rubbish from her bin.

- i. There was a surprisingly high proportion of residents (17%) requesting delivery of both general waste and recycling bins as a result of them being lost or stolen. 59 residents reported that they no longer had general waste bins, recycling bins or caddies. 14 residents specifically mentioned their recycling bin or glass caddy had been stolen.
8. In July 2009 4 abandoned bins were removed from properties in response to resident concerns and properties on Wingrove Road and Avenue were door knocked and all properties provided with a leaflet about wheeled bins causing an obstruction.
9. October 2009 - the team door knocked all properties on Wingrove Road and Wingrove Gardens regarding bins causing an obstruction. . The 'wheeled bin causing an obstruction' leaflet was delivered to all properties. The team also delivered a 'wheeled bin causing obstruction' leaflet to all properties on Wingrove Road/Wingrove Avenue.
10. In 2010 the team put address labels on all the green bins city wide to enable residents to identify their own bins. As part of the process in the back lanes duplicate or damaged bins were also removed.
11. In February and March 2011 'Little Wasters' was funded to carry out another campaign in the Wingrove Road and Avenue back lanes. Through a concentrated piece of work the number of bins left out in the area went from over 300 to 50. This was not sustained much beyond a three month period.
12. Work has taken place in Moorside, Westgate Hill and Wingrove Primary Schools over the past 13 years. As part of respect week at Wingrove Primary every pupil was involved in an interactive recycling assembly. Ongoing work with schools regarding litter and recycling takes place through the Enviro Schools project. All three schools engage with the programme.
13. Information about bin collections, litter waste and recycling has been shared with Greening Wingrove, the CIC and third sector partners since 2011.
14. February 2012 local services undertook door knocking in Arthur's Hill regarding bins left out and advising residents what to do with waste and recycling, especially bulky items.
15. July 2012 a coordinated project between Local Services, Environmental Crime, wardens, Police, Fire Service, Community Safety and other partners to support engagement focused on Brighton Grove/Dilston Road; Dilston Road/Croydon Road; Croydon Road/Tamworth Road. This included providing information and some enforcement activity. The waste tonnages were recorded. Bin day calendars were delivered.

16. August 2012 following a deliberate back lane fire in Brighton Grove/Dilston Road, that received significant press coverage, the Fire Service undertook some door knocking in the Arthur's Hill area about this and to offer home safety checks. The feedback from this was that crews they gained entry into 8 properties of which 70% did not have English as their first language. Of these 50% stated they did not know what day bin day was. The remaining 50% who said they did know, quite happily stated they wouldn't bring in their bin anyway as it was too much hassle.
17. In order to engage with residents about waste and recycling in a way that links to existing projects and communities of interest, the GAIA digital arts project has focused on the environment of the back lanes and back lanes have been and can be reclaimed and used. A DVD has been made that will be released shortly. This work is ongoing until early 2016.

Appendix four – brief for the 'Neighbourly' project aimed at piloting a replacement to envirocall

Project brief: Greening Wingrove neighbourhood management website (Working title: "Neighbourly")

Overview

1.1 This brief sets out some technical work packages which are required to facilitate a collaborative approach to neighbourhood management in the Wingrove area of Newcastle upon Tyne. The brief is principally centred on the production of an interactive website which is intended as a catalyst for the collaborative design and delivery of services and also as a means of promoting service co-ordination, local accountability and citizen engagement in the recording and monitoring of local environmental issues. It is intended that the website will be hosted by Newcastle University but that it will be developed to dovetail with Newcastle City Council's ICT infrastructure. In addition to its direct functionality as a tool for residents, the website will also be used to help make the business case for a dedicated neighbourhood manager and to raise visibility around service co-ordination issues with key partners such as the fire service and the police. In the longer term, there is an ambition to facilitate replication and adaptation of the website in other areas of the UK through an open source approach.

The online presence in Wingrove

2.1 This brief has been prepared in partnership with Greening Wingrove Community Interest Company (the CIC). The CIC is a neighbourhood-based community co-operative located in the west end of Newcastle. Its aims are to promote a cleaner and greener local environment and in doing so to reflect the priority concerns of local residents. It is pioneering an innovative approach to local neighbourhood management as a means of achieving these aims.

2.2 The existing web presence for the Wingrove area is fragmented, being comprised of a news-based website and two facebook groups. Currently the CIC is supported by a team from the Big Lottery known as the “WEA Greening Wingrove Lottery Project”. This project has a website www.greeningwingrove.org which is mainly used to provide information about lottery project events. Once the lottery project ends in 2017, the CIC will take ownership of the website, but there will be no interactive dimension to this website. In addition, the local web presence comprises of a “Greening Wingrove Street Clean” facebook group (supporting one of the CIC’s sub projects) and a “Greening Wingrove Community Co-ordinator” facebook group. The future of the latter hinges on the ability of the CIC to find succession funding for a community co-ordinator once the lottery project has ended. In addition there are numerous other community projects in the area, each with their own websites and facebook presences.

2.3 An app is already being developed by Newcastle University’s app-movement service¹, which will begin to address the current fragmentation by providing a hub which new residents can use to instantly find out what social activities and services are available locally. The app will locate existing community projects on a map and provide links to their itineraries. Work undertaken in response to this brief will explore the potential to develop this app and unite it with a new website under a common label “Neighbourly” which will serve as a brand for the Greening Wingrove approach. Although piloted in and developed with Greening Wingrove, the Neighbourly brand will be open source and designed to be taken up or adapted in other areas across the UK. The name “Neighbourly” reflects both the potential for national take up in the longer term and the impending loss of the label “Wingrove”, which until now has been the name of the local electoral ward.

Work packages within this brief

3.1 The long term demand for technical input exceeds the funding that is currently available. Quotes are therefore requested for three individual components, with the earlier components being designed to facilitate funding bids aimed at securing funding for full development of all components. The components are as follows:

- Work package one: technical contribution to proposed website design, production and hosting of a website capable of displaying preset information about the Wingrove neighbourhood in general conformance with the design requirements specified in section four but lacking any interactive functionality beyond weblinks to existing facebook groups.
- Work package two: development of the website above as an interactive resource. Firstly, through adaptation of the Fix My Street source code² as a means of allowing visitors to report environmental incidents to Newcastle City Council through the website and secondly via a campaigns/ debates section, either embedded into the site or facilitated through a link/s to a facebook group, together with “sticky” items.
- Work package three: further development of the existing app produced by the app-movement service or production of a sister app which replicates the two areas of functionality outlined in work package three but in app form.

¹ <https://app-movement.com/k7p97>

² There is a FixMyStreet documentation site at <http://www.fixmystreet.org/>, and a mailing list. This is the best place to go for help and advice for using the Fix My Street source code. mySociety’s developers can be contacted there as well as people who’ve implemented FixMyStreet in other countries/jurisdictions/ways, and may have encountered similar issues and can advise.

3.2 The specifications in sections four, five and six below are flexible and ideas for delivering these efficiently are welcomed.

Anticipated design of the proposed website

4.1 I imagine the website having a series of tabs across the top which equate to the various pages outlined below.

4.2 Landing page

- Greening Wingrove logo
- Adverts for the one/ two apps
- How to volunteer/ get involved

4.3 Page one - shops

This contains a map of Wingrove and there are rings around certain shops. Clicking on the rings pops out a table with a list of information about negative issues, on one side, and positive issues, on the other side, associated with that shop. There are dates attached to the issues and some of them may have become greyed out, showing that they have been resolved. There is the potential to add links to websites and free promotion for those businesses that have positive issues.

Expanding a negative issue provides more information on that issue, together with the efforts currently being taken to resolve it. Where appropriate it explains what residents can do. There may be a need to use colour to highlight where community input is needed on an outstanding issue with a shop or a positive initiative being put forward: the rings around these shops could be bigger and bolder and a link provided which takes the user to the relevant part of the campaigns and debates page.

In the future, positive steps could also be promoted on the website, such as steps to reduce the packaging offered to customers, and combined with some form of recognition.

4.4 Page two – refuse in the back lanes

A map allowing residents to report fly tipping and thereby showing areas where problems are persistent. Fines, arrests and prosecutions could be made visible together with requests for information from the community about culprits.

Facility to identify areas of persistent “side waste”, overflowing communal bins and the misuse of communal bins by traders or fly tippers.

4.5 Page three – Street sweeping

The page provides a map showing circuits and times for street sweeping. Following completion of work package two, residents will be able to make comments and raise concerns if they feel that their street has been missed out by the sweepers or not swept sufficiently. These would be directed to Newcastle City Council but logged on the map.

4.6 Page four – grass cutting rounds

The page provides a map of grass cutting rounds and frequency together with the facility to comment.

4.7 Page five- Street bins

The page provides information about where the street bins are and when they are meant to be emptied.

4.8 Page five – community noticeboard

This page contains:

- “Sticky” links to facebook debates relevant to the pages above.
- Information about litter picks, when they are happening and by whom (residents/students etc). Alternatively it may link to the Greening Wingrove Street Clean facebook group. Also some information about where tools can be borrowed for free if people want to do their own individual or ad hoc litter pics.
- Information about what’s on at the Greening Wingrove bike garden in the park, or alternatively a link to a new facebook group set up for the bike garden.
- Details, or a link to details, explaining pictorially which items should go in the recycling bins and which should go in the normal refuse bins.
- Another link to the community mapping app

Development of the website as an interactive tool

5.1 Each of the pages one to three, outlined in section four, would be developed to provide the ability for residents to report environmental incidents to Newcastle City Council. The website would need to maintain a count of how many reports have been forwarded.

5.2 Page four needs to be developed so that residents can add information about when street bins are full. The purpose of doing this is to highlight particular bin locations where the bins are being overwhelmed. Information would need to be held by the website operator as Newcastle City Council do not currently act on reports of overflowing bins. In the future this information could be used to review the location of bins or to argue for larger bins.

5.3 An additional, last page would be added to the website with the aim of assessing residents’ priorities for action and facilitating that action. The page lists users’ ideas for community action/ service improvements or joint working between the council and the community. It also has the facility for users to vote on them. Those ideas with most votes rise to the top of the list. At the end of the list is a button you can press which takes you to a form where you can ask for an additional campaign to be added to the list.

There needs to be the facility to debate the most popular items on the list. This could either be embedded into the website or it could be set up in facebook with a link provided.

These issues could, in the future, become additional tabs on the website. They might cover such issues as:

- The sufficiency of existing trade bin provision to traders by the council.
- The effect of the council charging residents to dispose of bulky waste and the potential for a social enterprise to do this more efficiently. Such a service could potentially be advertised via the website.

- Greening Wingrove could produce a statement in support of tougher sentences for fly tippers, which could be given to the council to assist during prosecutions.

Development of an app:

6.1 There is an ambition to apply for follow-on funding to also provide the website's functionality in the form of an app. This needs to be borne in mind as part of the development of the website. An important function of the app will be to reduce reporting times/ make reporting easier for both council staff and residents. Council staff currently report environmental incidents by phone and do not have the ability to jump the queue of calls from the public. This results in significant time costs for both staff and operators.

6.2 The Fix My Street app currently allows residents to submit incidents to Newcastle City Council in a similar way to its accompanying website, however there are a number of areas where improvement is needed.

i) The Fix My Street app covers all environmental issues from leaf mould to dog mess to fly tipping. This means that the map of reported incidents is undifferentiated and difficult to interpret. An improved app would concentrate only on the issues dealt with in those website tabs outlined in section four. Differentiation of these issues would ensure that community priorities are responded to.

ii) The Fix My Street app generates an email which must then be manually entered into Newcastle City Council's systems by one of their employees. The improved app would need to route reports efficiently into the Newcastle City Council's ICT infrastructure so as to avoid this manual step.

iii) The Fix My Street website places responsibility on the user, when prompted by an email, to update the system about whether an incident has been resolved. In instances where a user declares that a situation has not been resolved the website could highlight the issue with the aim of attracting wider community attention and stimulating a collaborative resolution.

Responding to the brief

A written response to the brief is required. The quote needs to be disaggregated by each of the three work packages. The work will need to follow Newcastle University's procurement rules which are available here <https://internal.ncl.ac.uk/purchasing-services/regulations/index.php> No deadline has been set at this time.

Additional note on Intellectual property

The intention is for intellectual property rights to be shared equally between Greening Wingrove, Newcastle University and The CHAT trust. However, it is anticipated that, as the new system will be open source, any commercial advantages arising from it would probably be in the form of technical know-how about how to create and tailor a similar system for other areas.